

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 IGA-01

L-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 MC-02 EB-07 COME-00

TRSE-00 OMB-01 EUR-12 (ISO) W

----- 048046

R 311540Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8613

DOD

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INFO USCINCEUR

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 1832

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO AID

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, TS

SUBJECT:CHIEF OF MISSION SUMMARY STATEMENT - FY 76 SECURITY
ASSISTANCE

REF: STATE 15489

1. SUMMARY: TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT IS AWARE THAT US GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA IS ENDING BUT HOPES FOR A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN FMS CREDIT TO ASSIST WITH PURCHASE OF NEW DEFENSIVE ARMS AGAINST WHAT IT SEES AS AN INCREASED THREAT FROM LIBYA. A GENUINELY FORTHCOMING RESPONSE TO TUNISIA'S ARMS REQUEST IS IN OUR INTEREST BOTH AS REASSURANCE TO GOT OF OUR POLITICAL SUPPORT, AND AS A DETERRENT TO POSSIBLE LIBYAN DESIGNS ON TUNISIAN TERRITORY. OUR BILATERAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN TUNISIAN/AMERICAN RELATIONS GENERALLY, AND ITS CONTINUATION THROUGH THE COMING TRAUMATIC PERIOD OF TRANSFER OF POWER FROM BOURGUIBA TO HIS SUCCESSORS WILL INCREASE THE ODDS THAT TUNISIA

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CONTINUES ITS MODERATE, WESTERN AND AMERICAN ORIENTED

POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. END
SUMMARY.

2. TWO IMPORTANT CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITH RESPECT TO AMERICAN-TUNISIAN SECURITY ASSISTANCE COOPERATION SINCE LAST YEAR'S CHIEF OF MISSION ASSESSMENT: (A) THE GOVERNMENT OF TUNISIA HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY NOTIFIED OF THE TERMINATION OF MAP GRANT MATERIEL ASSISTANCE AT THE END OF THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR; AND (B) THE TUNISIANS HAVE BECOME CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE AN INCREASE IN THE DANGER TO TUNISIAN SECURITY REPRESENTED BY COLONEL QADHAFI'S LIBYAN GOVERNMENT. TUNISIAN LEADERS HAVE ACCEPTED OUR EXPLANATIONS FOR THE DISCONTINUATION OF MILITARY GRANT AID, BUT HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN OVER THE LIBYAN THREAT BY ASKING TO PURCHASE FROM USG, WITH HELP OF INCREASED FMS CREDIT LEVELS, SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF DEFENSIVE EQUIPMENT, PRIMARILY EARLY WARNING RADAR, INTERCEPTOR AIRCRAFT AND SAM AND SSSM SYSTEMS FOR USE AGAINST POSSIBLE LIBYAN AIR OR ARMORED ATTACK.

3. TUNISIANS HAVE LIKEWISE SUBSEQUENTLY APPROACHED THEIR OTHER PRINCIPAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE SOURCE, FRANCE, WHICH HAS INFORMED THEM THAT NO INCREASE IS POSSIBLE OVER THE CURRENT \$3 MILLION MILITARY AID FRCNE NOW PROVIDES DURING 1975. WEST GERMANS, WHO MAINTAIN A CONTINUING MILITARY ASSISTANCE ROLE HERE AT A LEVEL OF ABOUT \$1 MILLION PER YEAR, LIMIT THEIR AID TO NON-LETHAL EQUIPMENT.

4. GIVEN THE CURRENT RELATIVE WELL-BEING OF THE TUNISIAN ECONOMY AND THE LIMITED AVAILABILITY WORLD-WIDE OF MAP FUNDS, THE DISCONTINUATION OF MAP ASSISTANCE HERE, OTHER THAN FOR TRAINING, APPEARS TO BE JUSTIFIED. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CONTINUATION OF AN ACTIVE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, BASED ON CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHED BY USLOT AND ON THE AVAILABILITY OF WEAPONS SYSTEMS AT LEAST PARTLY FINANCED THROUGH FMS CREDIT IS IN THE UNITED STATES INTEREST. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE TUNISIANS HAVE REVISED THEIR
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TRADITIONAL PRIORITIES, WHICH VIEW THE MILITARY SERVICES AS A NECESSARY EVIL TO BE HELD UNDER TIGHT CIVILIAN REIN AND KEPT AS SMALL AS POSSIBLE. THEIR RESPONSE TO INTELLIGENCE REPORTS INDICATING A HEIGHTENED DANGER FROM LIBYA HAS BEEN ONLY TO SEEK TO UPGRADE THEIR DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY, TO OBTAIN IF POSSIBLE A DETERRENT CREDIBILITY SUFFICIENT TO DISCOURAGE ATTACK, AND TO DELAY THE SUCCESS OF ANY SUCH ATTACK LONG ENOUGH TO

RALLY INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO TUNISIA'S SIDE. WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED THAT GOT INTENDS TO ALLOCATE INCREASED FUNDS OF ITS OWN TO HELP ATTAIN THESE OBJECTIVES.

5. TUNISIAN LEADERS USED TO BELIEVE THAT THE SIXTH FLEET WOULD AND SHOULD COME TO THE DEFENSE OF THEIR COUNTRY IN THE EVENT OF ATTACK. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA, NO DOUBT, STILL HOPES THAT THIS WOULD BE THE CASE, AS DO CERTAIN OTHER TUNISIAN OFFICIALS. BUT THERE APPEARS TO BE AN INCREASING REALIZATION ON THE PART OF TUNISIAN LEADERS AS A WHOLE OF THE ULTIMATE POLITICAL LIABILITY TO TUNISIA, IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS INTER-ARAB RELATIONSHIPS, OF A USG MILITARY INTERVENTION. THUS, THEY WANT THE SIXTH FLEET PRESENCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AS A DETERRENT TO A POTENTIAL OUTSIDE AGGRESSOR, WHILE BEING AWARE THAT, WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN, THEY MAY FIND IT MORE POLITIC TO CALL INSTEAD FOR THE POLITICAL RPT POLITICAL SUPPORT OF THEIR STRONG FRIENDS. WE HAVE

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L-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 MC-02 EB-07 COME-00

TRSE-00 OMB-01 EUR-12 /072 W
----- 046523

R 311540Z MAR 75

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GIVEN THE TUNISIANS NO ENCOURAGEMENT TO BELIEVE THAT THE SIXTH FLEET WILL PULL THEIR CHESTNUTS OUT OF THE FIRE. NEITHER HAVE WE DISCOURAGED THEM FROM BELIEVING

SO, SINCE CONFIDENCE IN USG STEADFASTNESS SERVES AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL EASSURANCE FACTOR,, STRENGTHENING TUNISIAN RESOLVE AND INTER ALIA KEEPING DISBURSEMENTS ON THE TUNISIAN MILITARY WITHIN PROPORTION.

6. IN ANY CASE, IT SEEMS PROBABLY THAT COLONEL QADHAFI BELIEVES THAT THERE IS A USG COMMITMENT TO TUNISIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. IT IS IN OUR INTEREST THAT HE SO BELIEVE AS A DETERRENT TO ANY POSSIBLE DESIGNS HE MAY HAVE ON TUNISIA. A FORTHCOMING RESPONSE BY THE UNITED STATES TO TUNISIA'S CURRENT ARMS PRUCHASE REQUEST IS LIKELY TO BE CONSTRUED BY QADHAFI AS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT WE ARE "PLEDGED" TO TUNISIA'S DEFENSE. A POSITIVE RESPONSE WILL ALSO FURTHER DEMONSTRATE TO THE TUNISIANS THE USG'S CONTINUED INTEREST IN TUNISIAN SECURITY. WHILE WE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT WISH TUNISIA TO DEVELOP A LARGE MILITARY MACHINE, AN INCREASE IN THE COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF IN THE FACE OF
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THE QADHAFI THREAT WOULD BOOST THE REGIME'S MORALE AND ENABLE IT TO CONTINUE TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED AS A MODERATE AND LOYAL FRIEND OF THE WEST AND, IN PARTICULAR, OF THE US.

7. THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND TUNISIA HAS A LONG AND SUCCESSFUL HISTORY, AND HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF HEALTHY AND USEFUL POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA STILL ON THE SCENE, THEIR VERY PERSONAL NATURE OF TUNISIA'S HISTORIC ATTACHMENT TO AMERICAN INTERESTS REMAINS. WE ARE IN PROCESS NOW, HOWEVER, OF BUILDING TOWARD THE DAY WHEN OTHERS WILL TAKE HIS PLACE. WHEN THAT DAY COMES IT WILL BE IMPORTANT THAT THE CONSTANCY OF OUR CONCERN FOR TUNISIA (AS CONTRASTED WITH OUR TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP FOR BOURGUIBA) BE APPARENT TO THE LEADERSHIP. CONTINUITY OF OUR SECURITY ASSISTANCE, AND ITS ADJUSTMENT IN VOLUME TO ACCORD, TO A DEGREE, WITH TUNISIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE NEED, WILL BE A CENTRAL ELEMENT IN DEMONSTRATING THAT CONSTANCY. AS TUNISIA'S REOURCES CONTINUE TO INCREASE, HELPED BY OUR CONTINUING MODEST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND THAT OF OTHER NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES, THE PAYOFF FOR OUR PERSISTENT MANIFESTATION OF CLOSE INTEREST IN TUNISIAN WELFARE WILL COME PARTLY IN THE FORM OF INCREASED EXPORT SALES, BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, AND OF PROFITABLE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES, AND MAINLY IN THE FORM OF A CONTINUING CLOSE SHARING OF VIEWS ON POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE UNITED STATES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, MILITARY SALES, MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TUNIS01832
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750111-0561
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975031/aaaaaaeq.tel
Line Count: 224
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 15489
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <05 DEC 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHIEF OF MISSION SUMMARY STATEMENT - FY 76 SECURITY ASSISTANCE
TAGS: MASS, TS
To: STATE JCS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006